



Francophone and Anglophone Foreign Policy in West Africa; A Comparative Study of Nigeria and Senegal

Johnkennedy T. Ikyase Ph.D¹, Idi

*Utaji James², Ayasire Abraham^{1,2,3} Department of Political Science Federal University Wukari
Yaromaikyau³*

Abstract

This research investigates the divide between Francophone and Anglophone nations in West African foreign policy by conducting a comparative analysis of Nigeria and Senegal. A qualitative research methodology was employed, utilizing secondary sources including textbooks, journal articles, ECOWAS reports, and policy documents. The study is grounded in Dependency Theory, which elucidates how historical colonial relationships and persistent external economic and political influences shape the foreign policy decisions of developing nations. The findings indicate that Nigeria's foreign policy is predominantly Afrocentric, interventionist, and driven by leadership, whereas Senegal's approach is more diplomatic, consensus-driven, and influenced by Francophone institutional networks and its historical connections with France. Furthermore, the research demonstrates that the Francophone-Anglophone divide continues to impact regional integration in West Africa through language barriers, variations in legal and administrative frameworks, and challenges in policy coordination, although the increasing cooperation within ECOWAS is gradually alleviating these issues. The study concludes that both nations are significant players in regional diplomacy despite their contrasting strategies. It recommends enhancing ECOWAS institutional and linguistic harmonization to facilitate better communication and policy coordination. Additionally, it advocates for deeper collaboration between Nigeria and Senegal in areas such as security, trade, and economic integration while minimizing external dependency.

Keywords: *Foreign Policy, Francophone-Anglophone Divide, Dependency Theory, ECOWAS Integration*

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Introduction

The foreign policy landscape in West Africa has been profoundly influenced by the colonial legacy of linguistic division, which established two

primary diplomatic traditions: the Francophone and Anglophone systems. This division continues to affect how countries in the region develop their external relations, participate in regional organizations, and react to global political and

economic challenges. Within this framework, Nigeria and Senegal emerge as significant case studies for examining the differing approaches of Anglophone and Francophone foreign policy behavior in West Africa. Nigeria, recognized as the most populous Anglophone nation, has traditionally adopted a more assertive and leadership-oriented foreign policy, whereas Senegal, a prominent Francophone country, is frequently characterized by a diplomatic approach grounded in continuity, moderation, and strong historical connections with France and the Francophonie system (Adebajo, 2021; Fagbadebo, 2022; World Bank, 2023).

The development of foreign policy in West Africa is inextricably linked to the broader quest for post-colonial identity and regional integration. Since gaining independence, both Francophone and Anglophone nations have sought to redefine their external relations in ways that align with national interests, sovereignty, and regional collaboration. Nevertheless, these initiatives are often influenced by external factors, particularly from former colonial powers. For example, Nigeria's foreign policy has consistently prioritized African unity and regional leadership, particularly within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), where it has assumed a leading role in peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and economic diplomacy. Scholars have observed that Nigeria's Afrocentric approach has established it as a crucial stabilizing force in West Africa, despite facing internal challenges such as insecurity and economic pressures (Nwangwu, 2024; UNECA, 2023; IMF, 2022). This is further illustrated by Nigeria's ongoing leadership in mediating regional crises and

facilitating democratic transitions within the sub-region (Onapajo & Babalola, 2024; ECOWAS Commission, 2023).

Conversely, Senegal's foreign policy demonstrates a more organized alignment with Francophone diplomatic networks, particularly through the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie. While upholding its sovereignty in international relations, Senegal has historically navigated its external engagements between France, multilateral institutions, and African regional organizations. This diplomatic strategy has allowed Senegal to cultivate a reputation for political stability and peaceful diplomacy within West Africa. Recent evaluations of regional politics indicate that Francophone West African nations frequently display coordinated diplomatic behavior influenced by shared language, institutional frameworks, and historical connections to France, which continue to shape their external policy trajectories (Okunade, 2024; OECD, 2021; The African Union (2022) highlights Senegal's active participation in peacekeeping missions and mediation efforts, underscoring its dedication to multilateral diplomacy and conflict prevention within the region (Diop, 2023; UNDP, 2022; World Bank, 2024).

In the current political landscape of West Africa, both Nigeria and Senegal have emerged as pivotal players in tackling regional instability, particularly in light of the increasing occurrences of military coups, terrorism, and governance crises affecting the Sahel and coastal nations. In response to these pressing issues, ECOWAS has adopted a more interventionist stance, implementing sanctions and employing diplomatic pressure to restore

constitutional order in member states facing coups or democratic regression. Nigeria has been notably proactive in influencing these responses, reflecting its aspirations for leadership and security concerns within the sub-region. Concurrently, Senegal has assumed a significant diplomatic role in mediation initiatives, prioritizing negotiation and regional dialogue over confrontational tactics. Recent regional analyses indicate that ECOWAS's expanding engagement in crisis management reveals both the strengths and limitations of West African collective diplomacy in fostering stability and integration (Onapajo & Babalola, 2024; African Development Bank, 2023; ECOWAS Commission, 2022). This developing regional response illustrates the complementary yet occasionally divergent strategies of Anglophone and Francophone nations in confronting common security and governance challenges.

Moreover, the interplay between Francophone and Anglophone foreign policy traditions continues to influence the efficacy of regional cooperation. Although both Nigeria and Senegal are actively involved in ECOWAS, disparities in diplomatic approaches, external partnerships, and policy priorities can sometimes lead to challenges in coordination. For instance, Nigeria's more interventionist stance on peace enforcement has at times contrasted with the more cautious and diplomatically reserved approach of Francophone nations, highlighting broader historical divergences in state development and external reliance. Nevertheless, both nations persist in making substantial contributions to regional peace, economic integration, and diplomatic collaboration

in West Africa, especially through multilateral organizations and collective security frameworks designed to enhance regional stability and development.

Conceptual Clarifications

Foreign Policy

Foreign policy encompasses the array of strategies, decisions, and actions that a state employs to manage its relationships with other states and international entities in pursuit of national objectives. Scholars, however, have varying interpretations regarding its meaning and fundamental driving forces. Hill (2021) posits that foreign policy constitutes the totality of official external relations undertaken by a state within the international system. This definition primarily characterizes foreign policy as observable state behavior in external matters. While this perspective is beneficial for recognizing state actions, it has faced criticism for being predominantly descriptive. In contrast, Hudson (2021) contends that Hill's framework fails to adequately address the internal factors influencing foreign policy behavior, such as leadership psychology, domestic politics, and bureaucratic competition. Thus, Hudson broadens the discourse by asserting that an understanding of foreign policy must encompass not only external actions but also the internal dynamics of decision-making.

Neack (2020) characterizes foreign policy as the intentions, statements, and actions of a state aimed at the external environment, along with the reactions these provoke from other entities. This definition emphasizes interaction, indicating that foreign policy is inherently relational rather than

unilateral. Conversely, Morin and Paquin (2023) contest this perspective, asserting that Neack's emphasis on observable behavior fails to adequately reflect the intricate interplay between domestic institutions and international influences. They propose that foreign policy should be viewed as an ongoing interaction between internal and external dynamics, rather than merely as state actions and their corresponding reactions. Allison and Zelikow (2022) examine foreign policy through the lens of decision-making, contending that it arises not from a singular rational actor but from the competing interests of bureaucracies and governmental negotiations. This perspective is significant as it challenges the notion that states operate as cohesive entities. In contrast, Hill (2021) indirectly supports a more unified perspective of the state in its external relations. Additionally, structural realists critique the approach taken by Allison and Zelikow, arguing that an overemphasis on internal politics neglects the limitations imposed by the international system, where global power dynamics restrict state options irrespective of domestic conflicts.

Morin and Paquin (2023) enhance the comprehension of foreign policy by highlighting the interplay between domestic politics, institutions, and international influences. This comprehensive approach is widely recognized in contemporary foreign policy analysis as it connects various levels of explanation. Nevertheless, Neack (2020) provides a critique of this methodology by arguing that an overly broad definition of foreign policy may lead to a loss of analytical precision, as nearly any state action could be classified as foreign policy.

Smith, Hadfield, and Dunne (2024) contend that foreign policy is influenced by a mix of identity, domestic politics, and global frameworks. Their perspective endorses a multi-causal explanation, dismissing single-factor theories. While this enhances the depth of explanation, Allison and Zelikow (2022) would contend that such extensive integration might obscure the focus on specific decision-making processes, complicating the identification of the individuals who truly influence foreign policy outcomes at particular times.

The term Francophone broadly encompasses states, societies, or individuals that utilize French as an official, administrative, or commonly spoken language, particularly in areas such as governance, education, diplomacy, and international relations. Chafer and Cumming (2021) assert that Francophone states are characterized by political and administrative frameworks significantly influenced by French colonial history, especially within Africa. They further elaborate that Francophone Africa is defined not only by its language but also by ongoing institutional and diplomatic ties with France, notably through organizations like La Francophonie. This perspective is valuable as it connects language with historical and institutional evolution. Conversely, Kohnert (2022) contests this viewpoint, arguing that an excessive emphasis on colonial heritage may overstate the current French influence. He notes that numerous Francophone African nations are now adopting more autonomous foreign policies and fostering a variety of international partnerships beyond France.

In a similar vein, Bach (2020) characterizes

Francophone Africa as a political and cultural domain defined by a common language and frameworks for post-colonial collaboration. He underscores the impact of Francophone identity on diplomatic conduct, elite networks, and regional partnerships. Conversely, Cummings (2023) contests this sweeping assertion, claiming that the Francophone identity lacks uniformity. He points out that West African Francophone nations exhibit considerable variation in their political systems and foreign policy decisions, indicating that language alone cannot account for their international actions or developmental trajectories.

From an institutional standpoint, Bourmaud (2021) posits that Francophone nations frequently exhibit centralized administrative frameworks influenced by French governance models, particularly in their legal and bureaucratic systems. This observation elucidates the commonalities in state institutions throughout Francophone Africa. However, Adebajo (2024) disputes this perspective, asserting that domestic political dynamics, leadership styles, and regional influences often play a more critical role than the inherited French institutional structures in determining contemporary governance and foreign policy choices.

In a recent analysis, Breton and Ndiaye (2023) contend that the concept of Francophone identity has become increasingly symbolic in contemporary times. They propose that it now serves more as a cultural and diplomatic network instead of a mechanism of control exerted by France. Many Francophone African nations, they assert, are now utilizing *La Francophonie* as a means for collaboration rather than reliance. Conversely,

Pigeaud and Sylla (2022) maintain that economic ties, particularly in trade and monetary frameworks, continue to exhibit significant structural influence from France. This indicates that, despite political transformations, aspects of dependency are still apparent in Francophone Africa.

Anglophone State

An Anglophone state is defined as a nation where English serves as the official language for administration, governance, education, and diplomacy, primarily due to the influence of British colonialism. According to Mamdani (2020), Anglophone African nations are significantly shaped by the colonial legacy of indirect rule implemented by the British, which established a dual governance system that distinguished between 'native authorities' and formal state institutions. He posits that this framework continues to affect governance, citizenship, and political accountability in numerous Anglophone countries. This perspective is crucial as it connects modern state fragility and ethnic politics to the administrative systems established during colonial times. Conversely, Englebert (2021) contests this viewpoint, asserting that the colonial legacy alone cannot adequately account for present state performance. He highlights that post-colonial political decisions and the behavior of elites have a more substantial impact on institutional outcomes than the inherited British frameworks. In a similar vein, Herbst (2021) characterizes Anglophone African states through the perspective of territorial governance and state consolidation, contending that the British colonial administration established relatively stronger centralized structures in

comparison to other colonial systems. He argues that this has affected the bureaucratic capacity development in Anglophone states. However, Boone (2022) challenges this broad assertion, claiming that numerous Anglophone states continue to face challenges with inconsistent territorial control and limited state presence in rural regions. She underscores that political negotiations and regional power dynamics frequently weaken centralized authority more than colonial legacies can explain.

From a political economy standpoint, Bates (2020) contends that Anglophone African nations frequently embody market-driven policies shaped by British liberal economic traditions. He posits that these nations historically embraced more open trade systems in contrast to their Francophone counterparts. Nevertheless, Mkandawire (2023) disputes this perspective, asserting that such comparisons oversimplify the economic history of Africa. He emphasizes that both Anglophone and Francophone nations underwent similar state-led development strategies following independence, indicating that colonial language classifications do not consistently predict economic policy decisions.

In a more recent institutional analysis, Cheeseman (2022) asserts that Anglophone nations generally exhibit stronger competitive electoral politics and more open civil societies compared to other linguistic groups in Africa. However, Lindberg (2024) refutes this assertion by highlighting that democratic performance in Anglophone Africa is markedly inconsistent, with certain nations consolidating democracy while others face authoritarian regressions. This indicates that a

heritage of the English language does not ensure democratic stability or institutional robustness.

Theoretical Framework

The most appropriate theory for examining the foreign policy of Francophone and Anglophone nations in West Africa, specifically through a comparative analysis of Nigeria and Senegal, is Dependency Theory. This theory elucidates how the legacy of colonialism and ongoing external economic and political influences continue to affect the foreign policy actions of African nations. Dependency Theory originated in the late 1950s and 1960s as a counter to modernization theory. Notable contributors to this theory include Raúl Prebisch in the 1950s, Andre Gunder Frank in the 1960s, Samir Amin in the 1970s, and Fernando Henrique Cardoso in the 1970s. These scholars contended that the underdevelopment observed in Africa and other developing regions is not an inherent phase of growth but rather a condition resulting from historical exploitation and persistent reliance on developed nations. Frank (1966) introduced the concept of 'the development of underdevelopment,' suggesting that impoverished nations remain in a state of poverty due to the continuous extraction of their resources for the benefit of wealthier countries. Amin (1976) elaborated on this notion through the idea of peripheral capitalism, indicating that developing nations remain structurally dependent on advanced capitalist economies.

The fundamental premises of Dependency Theory posit that the global system is categorized into core, semi-periphery, and periphery states, with the core deriving the most benefits from economic

interactions. It posits that colonialism has transformed into neo-colonialism via international trade, financial institutions, and political influence. Furthermore, it asserts that developing nations possess limited autonomy in their decision-making processes due to their economic dependence, which constrains their policy independence. Another key assumption is that global inequality is perpetuated through unequal exchange, wherein resources are transferred from poorer nations to richer ones, thereby reinforcing the underdevelopment of peripheral states.

Despite its advantages, Dependency Theory has faced criticism. A significant critique is that it tends to be overly deterministic and fails to sufficiently acknowledge the agency of developing nations in determining their own developmental trajectories. For instance, several Asian countries have managed to industrialize successfully despite their initial dependency. Another point of contention is that the theory places excessive emphasis on external factors while neglecting internal challenges such as corruption, ineffective governance, and inadequate leadership, which also play a crucial role in shaping development outcomes. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the theory is becoming less applicable in today's interconnected world, where economic interdependence is prevalent among both developed and developing nations.

Dependency Theory is particularly pertinent to this study as it elucidates how historical colonial ties and current global economic frameworks continue to impact the foreign policy behaviors of West African nations, notably Nigeria and Senegal. The theory posits that developing countries do not

possess complete independence in their decision-making processes due to their ongoing ties to developed nations through economic, political, and institutional dependencies. In Senegal's case, its longstanding historical connection with France and its ongoing participation in Francophone organizations like the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie illustrate how external influences continue to shape its diplomatic strategies, economic alliances, and regional cooperation efforts, emphasizing stability and multilateral engagement. Conversely, while Nigeria exhibits greater political assertiveness and assumes a leadership role within ECOWAS, its foreign policy remains affected by its reliance on crude oil exports, international financial institutions, foreign investments, and global markets, which in turn influence its diplomatic decisions and international relations. Consequently, Dependency Theory provides a clear framework for understanding the differing foreign policy behaviors of Francophone and Anglophone states in West Africa, as their historical ties, economic dependencies, and external influences vary significantly. Despite its merits, Dependency Theory has encountered criticism. A notable critique is that it often appears overly deterministic and does not adequately recognize the agency of developing nations in shaping their own developmental paths. For example, several Asian countries have successfully industrialized despite their initial dependency. Another area of concern is that the theory places too much emphasis on external factors while overlooking internal issues such as corruption, ineffective governance, and poor leadership, which are also vital in influencing

development outcomes. Additionally, it has been argued that the theory is becoming increasingly irrelevant in today's interconnected world, where economic interdependence is common among both developed and developing nations.

Dependency Theory is especially relevant to this study as it clarifies how historical colonial relationships and current global economic structures continue to affect the foreign policy behaviors of West African countries, particularly Nigeria and Senegal. The theory suggests that developing nations do not enjoy complete autonomy in their decision-making processes due to their persistent connections with developed countries through economic, political, and institutional dependencies. In the case of Senegal, its long-standing historical ties with France and its ongoing involvement in Francophone organizations such as the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie demonstrate how external factors continue to influence its diplomatic strategies, economic partnerships, and regional cooperation initiatives, highlighting stability and multilateral engagement. In contrast, while Nigeria displays greater political assertiveness and takes on a leadership role within ECOWAS, its foreign policy is still shaped by its dependence on crude oil exports, international financial institutions, foreign investments, and global markets, which subsequently affect its diplomatic choices and international relations. Consequently, Dependency Theory provides a clear framework for understanding the differing foreign policy behaviors of Francophone and Anglophone nations in West Africa, as their historical ties, economic reliance, and external influences differ, thereby affecting

their interactions with both regional and global entities.

Historical Context of Foreign Policy in West Africa

The development of foreign policy in West Africa is intricately linked to the region's colonial past, the fight for independence, and the ongoing initiatives for regional collaboration. The foreign policies of West African countries have been influenced by colonial governance structures, linguistic disparities, ideological variations, economic requirements, and evolving global political landscapes. Therefore, to comprehend the current foreign policy dynamics in the region, it is essential to consider the impact of colonial legacies, the establishment of sovereign states, and the emergence of regional organizations like ECOWAS, which have been pivotal in shaping diplomatic interactions and cooperation among nations (Chafer & Cumming, 2021).

A fundamental aspect of the differences in foreign policy within West Africa stems from the colonial division between French and British governance. French colonialism was marked by a focus on assimilation and a strong centralized authority, which fostered enduring political, economic, and diplomatic connections between France and its former colonies. Nations such as Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali have continued to uphold close ties with France following their independence, particularly in the realms of security, economic support, and diplomacy. As noted by Kohnert (2022), these connections continue to shape the foreign policy trajectories of Francophone nations, even as many now pursue a broader array of international partnerships. Conversely, British

colonial administration was characterized by indirect rule, which permitted greater local autonomy and resulted in a distinct political framework in Anglophone countries like Nigeria and Ghana. This approach facilitated more independent foreign policy decisions post-independence and fostered a stronger engagement with wider African and global matters (Nwangwu, 2024).

The linguistic divide between Francophone and Anglophone nations has had a significant impact on early regional relations in West Africa. In the immediate aftermath of independence, countries frequently operated within distinct diplomatic and economic frameworks, which hindered cooperation. Nevertheless, the forces of globalization and initiatives for regional integration have progressively diminished these obstacles, promoting increased interaction among states despite their linguistic disparities. This transformation is particularly noticeable with the formation of ECOWAS in 1975, which was established to enhance economic integration and regional collaboration among West African nations, irrespective of their colonial histories. Since its inception, ECOWAS has evolved into a crucial platform for diplomacy, trade, and collective action within the region (Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2023).

Over time, ECOWAS has broadened its scope from solely economic cooperation to encompass peace and security responsibilities. The organization has played an active role in conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts in nations such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and Côte d'Ivoire. Additionally, it has intervened in recent political

upheavals involving military coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. As noted by Edodi and Ahimbisibwe (2024), ECOWAS has emerged as one of Africa's most significant regional organizations, although it still encounters difficulties in preserving unity and upholding democratic principles among its member states.

In terms of foreign policy orientation, Francophone nations initially maintained a close alignment with France and Western powers following their independence. Leaders like Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal underscored the importance of cooperation with France for stability and development. According to Breton and Ndiaye (2023), this relationship afforded Francophone countries access to aid, military assistance, and diplomatic support, although many of these nations are now seeking to diversify their international partnerships to include emerging powers such as China and Turkey. Conversely, Anglophone countries like Nigeria and Ghana have embraced more Pan-African and independent foreign policy approaches. Nigeria, in particular, has established itself as a leader in African matters, advocating for liberation movements, fostering unity, and engaging in peacekeeping operations throughout the continent (Nwangwu, 2024).

During the Cold War period, Francophone nations predominantly aligned themselves with the Western bloc due to their historical connections with France, whereas certain Anglophone nations adopted non-aligned or hybrid foreign policy approaches. Under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana championed Pan-Africanism and the Non-Aligned Movement, while Nigeria focused on African unity

and anti-colonial efforts. Morin and Paquin (2023) indicate that these distinctions mirrored broader initiatives by African nations to safeguard their sovereignty within a bipolar global framework dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union. In recent times, foreign policy in West Africa has shown greater convergence, with both Francophone and Anglophone countries addressing common challenges such as insecurity, terrorism, migration, economic growth, and democratic governance. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been instrumental in fostering collaboration and collective responses to these challenges, thereby helping to mitigate the historical rifts established by colonialism. Although the legacies of colonialism continue to affect diplomatic conduct, regional collaboration and mutual interests now exert a more significant influence on the formulation of foreign policy throughout West Africa (Edodi & Ahimbisibwe, 2024; Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2023).

Foreign Policy of Nigeria (Anglophone Perspective)

Nigeria's foreign policy is recognized as one of the most significant diplomatic traditions in Africa, exemplifying the Anglophone foreign policy approach in West Africa. Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has consistently engaged in external relations focused on safeguarding national interests, fostering African unity, ensuring regional stability, promoting economic growth, and enhancing its global standing. As the most populous nation in Africa and one of its largest economies, Nigeria frequently takes on a leadership role in both regional and continental

matters. According to Nwangwu (2024), Nigeria's foreign policy has maintained a steady commitment to African development, peace, and international collaboration, despite governmental changes.

The primary goals of Nigeria's foreign policy encompass the safeguarding of sovereignty, promotion of economic advancement, defense of territorial integrity, enhancement of national security, support for African unity, and contribution to global peace. These goals are also enshrined in Nigeria's constitutional provisions, which highlight the importance of African integration, adherence to international law, and the promotion of international cooperation. Ade-Ibijola (2023) observes that Nigeria's foreign policy has historically sought to balance the needs of domestic development with its regional and continental obligations, thereby establishing the country as both a national player and a regional power.

A key characteristic of Nigeria's foreign policy is its Afrocentrism, which prioritizes Africa in its international relations. This principle arose from the conviction that Nigeria's security and development are intricately connected to the stability of the African continent. From the early post-independence era under Tafawa Balewa to the 1970s with leaders such as Murtala Mohammed and Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria actively supported anti-colonial movements throughout Africa. It extended financial, diplomatic, and political assistance to liberation efforts in nations like Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa (Adebajo, 2024). Nigeria's staunch opposition to apartheid in South Africa further underscored its dedication to African liberation, as

it provided funding, endorsed sanctions, and facilitated international pressure against the apartheid regime.

Nigeria's prominent role in ECOWAS also illustrates its Anglophone foreign policy approach. Since ECOWAS was established in 1975, Nigeria has been a significant financial supporter and a key proponent of regional integration and security collaboration. Okunade and Ogunnubi (2023) note that Nigeria has been instrumental in advancing trade liberalization, enabling the free movement of individuals, and establishing collective security frameworks within the region. This leadership became particularly evident during regional crises, notably in Liberia and Sierra Leone, where Nigeria spearheaded ECOWAS peacekeeping efforts through the ECOMOG mission. In Liberia, Nigerian forces constituted the majority of peacekeeping troops and played a crucial role in stabilizing the nation and facilitating peace agreements (Adebajo, 2024). A similar intervention in Sierra Leone was pivotal in restoring democratic governance following a military coup, although these missions incurred substantial financial and human costs.

Nigeria's foreign policy encompasses intricate relationships with Western powers, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. These connections are influenced by historical associations, trade interactions, educational exchanges, and security collaborations. The United States continues to be a vital ally in areas such as counterterrorism, governance reforms, and energy partnerships (Akindele & Nwangwu, 2023). Nevertheless, Nigeria's relations with

Western nations have faced strains, particularly during periods of military governance, when sanctions were enacted due to concerns regarding human rights and democracy. In spite of these obstacles, Nigeria has sustained a pragmatic approach to engagement with Western countries while safeguarding its sovereignty.

In recent years, China has emerged as an increasingly significant partner in Nigeria's foreign policy. China's participation in infrastructure development, which includes railways, roads, airports, and energy initiatives, has grown considerably through bilateral cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiative. Zhang and Alon (2023) indicate that Nigeria perceives this partnership as a strategy to tackle infrastructure shortfalls and stimulate economic growth, although apprehensions persist regarding debt sustainability and long-term reliance.

Economic diplomacy has also taken center stage in Nigeria's foreign policy, particularly since the restoration of democracy in 1999. Successive administrations have prioritized attracting foreign investment, enhancing trade, and strengthening economic ties with other nations. A notable accomplishment was the 2005 debt relief agreement with the Paris Club, which resulted in the cancellation of approximately \$18 billion in external debt (Ade-Ibijola, 2023). This development bolstered Nigeria's international financial position and increased investor confidence.

Oil diplomacy constitutes a significant aspect of Nigeria's foreign policy. As a prominent oil producer and a member of OPEC, Nigeria leverages its petroleum resources as a means of international

engagement. Oil exports are a substantial source of government revenue and foreign exchange earnings, rendering energy relations pivotal to its diplomatic efforts. Nigeria actively engages with major energy consumers, including China, India, the United States, and various European nations, through oil trade and investment collaborations (Adebajo, 2024). Nevertheless, the volatility of global oil prices and the worldwide transition towards renewable energy sources have introduced new challenges, prompting Nigeria to prioritize economic diversification. In summary, Nigeria's foreign policy embodies the traits of an Anglophone nation that underscores regional leadership, Afrocentrism, diplomatic autonomy, and proactive involvement in global matters. Despite facing obstacles such as insecurity, economic reliance, and regional turmoil, Nigeria persists in its influential role in shaping West African foreign policy and remains a significant player in both African and international diplomacy.

Foreign Policy of Senegal (Francophone Perspective)

Senegal's foreign policy is widely acknowledged as one of the most stable, moderate, and consistent diplomatic traditions within Francophone Africa. Since gaining independence from France in 1960, Senegal has adopted a foreign policy founded on political moderation, multilateral cooperation, regional integration, peaceful conflict resolution, and robust international partnerships. In contrast to numerous African nations that have undergone frequent policy changes due to instability, Senegal has preserved continuity in its external relations, enabling it to cultivate a strong international

reputation. Chafer and Cumming (2021) characterize Senegal as a prime example of a Francophone state that has adeptly balanced its close relationship with France while simultaneously broadening its global diplomatic engagements.

The primary goals of Senegal's foreign policy encompass the safeguarding of national sovereignty, the promotion of economic growth, the assurance of regional peace and security, the enhancement of international collaboration, and the advancement of African integration.

Senegalese leaders have consistently regarded diplomacy as a means for national development and global recognition. As noted by Ndiaye (2023), Senegal's foreign policy is fundamentally rooted in dialogue, negotiation, and consensus-building rather than in confrontation, which has bolstered its reputation as a peaceful and dependable diplomatic player in Africa.

A significant aspect of Senegal's foreign policy is its enduring relationship with France and the wider Francophonie framework. Following independence, under the leadership of President Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegal opted to sustain close political, economic, and cultural ties with France rather than entirely severing its colonial connections. This choice was predicated on the belief that collaboration with France would yield development assistance, technical support, and the international access necessary for national advancement. Kohnert (2022) highlights that this partnership has continued to furnish Senegal with economic aid, military collaboration, educational connections, and investment prospects, thereby contributing to its political stability and development.

Senegal is an active participant in the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, which fosters collaboration among French-speaking nations in areas such as education, culture, governance, and economic development. Through this network, Senegal has bolstered its diplomatic ties with other Francophone countries and increased its visibility on the international stage. Concurrently, Senegal has broadened its foreign relations by enhancing partnerships with China, the United States, Turkey, the Gulf states, and the European Union, thereby mitigating its reliance on France (Chafer & Cumming, 2021).

A significant aspect of Senegal's foreign policy is its focus on political stability and diplomatic moderation. Since gaining independence, Senegal has been one of the few West African nations to avoid extended civil wars or recurrent military coups. This stability has fortified its international credibility and diplomatic sway. Faye (2024) elucidates that Senegal holds the view that domestic stability amplifies external influence, which is why it prioritizes peace, democracy, and institutional continuity in its foreign engagements.

Additionally, Senegal has assumed a vital mediating role in regional conflicts. It has engaged in diplomatic initiatives in nations such as Mali, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire, frequently advocating for peaceful negotiations and democratic transitions. Both President Abdoulaye Wade and President Macky Sall have taken part in regional mediation efforts aimed at alleviating political tensions. Adebajo (2024) observes that Senegal's moderate diplomatic stance has established it as a reliable intermediary between Francophone and

Anglophone countries in West Africa.

Within ECOWAS and the African Union, Senegal has consistently championed regional integration, democratic governance, peacebuilding, and collective security. The nation has played a significant role in initiatives that promote the free movement of individuals, economic collaboration, and responses to terrorism and political unrest. As noted by Okunade and Ogunnubi (2023), Senegal stands out as one of the most fervent proponents of enhanced regional cooperation and institutional fortification in West Africa. Additionally, it has endorsed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which aims to enhance intra-African trade and economic integration (Murithi, 2023).

Senegal is also a prominent contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Its military and civilian personnel have been involved in missions across various countries, including Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Lebanon, and South Sudan. The United Nations Department of Peace Operations (2024) consistently ranks Senegal among the leading African contributors to peacekeeping efforts, underscoring its unwavering commitment to global peace and security.

Economic diplomacy has emerged as a pivotal element of Senegal's foreign policy. The government has leveraged international relations to attract investments, foster trade, and support national development initiatives such as the Emerging Senegal Plan. According to Ndiaye (2023), economic diplomacy has become a crucial component of Senegal's growth strategy, particularly in sectors such as infrastructure,

agriculture, energy, and technology. The country has successfully drawn substantial Chinese investment for infrastructure projects while preserving robust relationships with France and international financial institutions. Recent discoveries of oil and gas reserves have further elevated Senegal's significance in the global economic landscape (Faye, 2024).

Cultural diplomacy significantly contributes to Senegal's international relations. Through the Negritude philosophy established by Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegal has advocated for African identity, culture, and intellectual contributions on a global scale. Cultural festivals, academic exchanges, and Francophone networks have bolstered its soft power worldwide. Chafer and Cumming (2021) contend that this cultural diplomacy has improved Senegal's international reputation and influence.

Comparative Analysis of Nigeria and Senegal Foreign Policy

Nigeria and Senegal stand as two of the most prominent nations in West Africa; however, their foreign policies are shaped by distinct historical contexts, colonial legacies, and diplomatic practices. Nigeria, an Anglophone nation that was formerly under British colonial rule, typically adopts a foreign policy centered on Afrocentrism, regional leadership, and strategic autonomy. In contrast, Senegal, a Francophone nation that was previously colonized by France, embraces a more moderate, diplomatic, and multilateral stance, heavily influenced by Francophone institutions and enduring connections with France. Despite these disparities, both nations play vital roles in West African diplomacy, peacekeeping, and regional

integration (Chafer & Cumming, 2021; Nwangwu, 2024).

A significant distinction between the two countries lies in their foundational foreign policy ideologies. Nigeria's foreign policy is rooted in Afrocentrism, which prioritizes Africa in its external relations. This approach entails Nigeria's active support for African unity, liberation movements, and regional development. This was particularly evident in its staunch opposition to apartheid in South Africa and its backing of independence movements throughout Southern Africa (Adebajo, 2024). Conversely, Senegal adheres to a Francophone diplomatic tradition that merges African solidarity with collaboration with France and other French-speaking nations. While it also advocates for African In the context of integration, Senegal prioritizes diplomacy, cultural connections, and multilateral collaboration over activism (Kohnert, 2022). Consequently, Nigeria tends to adopt a more assertive stance in its foreign policy, whereas Senegal approaches it with a focus on diplomacy and consensus-building.

A significant distinction lies in their interactions with former colonial powers. Nigeria has pursued a relatively autonomous foreign policy from Britain, despite its Commonwealth membership. It has frequently adopted independent positions on critical international matters such as apartheid, peacekeeping, and regional conflicts (Ade-Ibijola, 2023). Conversely, Senegal has fostered closer relations with France through avenues such as economic collaboration, military support, education, and Francophone institutions. Although Senegal has recently broadened its foreign relations to

encompass China, Turkey, and other partners, its historical and institutional connections with France remain more robust compared to Nigeria's ties with Britain (Faye, 2024).

Regarding regional leadership, Nigeria holds a prominent position in West Africa due to its substantial population, economic prowess, and military capabilities. It has frequently spearheaded ECOWAS initiatives, offered financial assistance, and deployed troops for peacekeeping operations. Nigeria's leadership in Liberia and Sierra Leone through the ECOMOG intervention exemplifies its proactive role in regional security (Adebajo, 2024). In contrast, Senegal's leadership is primarily exercised through diplomatic means and moral authority rather than military or economic might. It is esteemed for its political stability and its capacity to foster dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution. According to Ndiaye (2023), Senegal's influence is rooted more in credibility and stability than in material power.

Their methods of resolving conflicts also vary. Nigeria frequently merges diplomatic efforts with military action when addressing regional crises. Its participation in Liberia and Sierra Leone exemplifies its readiness to employ force to achieve peace and restore democratic governance (Adebajo, 2024). Conversely, Senegal favors peaceful negotiations, mediation, and multilateral cooperation. While it plays a significant role in United Nations peacekeeping operations, its strategy is predominantly preventive and diplomatic in character (Murithi, 2023). This illustrates Nigeria's more interventionist approach in contrast to Senegal's gentler diplomatic style.

In terms of economics, Nigeria's foreign policy is heavily influenced by its oil resources, which afford it considerable leverage in global energy markets. As a member of OPEC, Nigeria engages with major powers like the United States, China, and European nations through energy diplomacy (Adebajo, 2024). In contrast, Senegal's economic diplomacy is more centered on attracting foreign investments, development assistance, and infrastructure support. Through its development initiative (Plan Sénégal Émergent), Senegal has established itself as a reliable destination for investors, particularly in sectors such as infrastructure, energy, and tourism (Faye, 2024). Therefore, Nigeria depends more on its resource power, while Senegal emphasizes development partnerships and stability.

Soft power is also manifested differently in these two nations. Nigeria's global cultural impact is derived from Nollywood, Afrobeats music, literature, and internationally acclaimed artists and writers, which have enhanced its global image (Nwangwu, 2024). In contrast, Senegal's soft power is founded on its cultural diplomacy, intellectual heritage, and the Negritude philosophy developed by Léopold Sédar Senghor. This has enabled Senegal to cultivate a robust reputation for culture, education, and intellectual contributions in international relations (Chafer & Cumming, 2021).

In the context of its international reputation, Nigeria is perceived as a regional powerhouse with significant influence, yet it grapples with challenges such as insecurity and governance issues. Conversely, Senegal is esteemed as one of Africa's most stable democracies, recognized for its peaceful transitions and political continuity, which bolster its

diplomatic credibility (Kohnert, 2022). Collectively, Nigeria and Senegal exemplify two distinct yet complementary foreign policy models in West Africa—Nigeria prioritizing leadership, activism, and power, while Senegal focuses on diplomacy, stability, and cooperation. Despite their differences, both nations are crucial in fostering peace, development, and regional integration in West Africa.

Impact of Francophone and Anglophone Divide on West African Relations

The divide between Francophone and Anglophone countries continues to be a significant factor influencing interstate relations, diplomacy, and regional integration in West Africa. This division stems from the colonial partition of the region by France and Britain, resulting in two separate administrative, linguistic, legal, and educational systems. Nations such as Senegal, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, and Niger were colonized by France, whereas Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and The Gambia fell under British rule. These historical distinctions persist in shaping how states engage, negotiate, and collaborate in both regional and international contexts, even long after achieving independence (Chafer & Cumming, 2021; Kohnert, 2022).

One significant consequence of this divide is the language barrier in diplomacy. English and French continue to be the primary official languages in the region, which frequently results in communication challenges during diplomatic meetings and regional negotiations. While ECOWAS recognizes English, French, and Portuguese as its official languages, variations in language can hinder decision-making

processes and increase dependence on translation services. This reliance can occasionally result in delays in policy execution and misunderstandings among member states. Okunade and Ogunnubi (2023) emphasize that linguistic obstacles can diminish the effectiveness of regional collaboration, particularly in intricate discussions regarding trade, security, and governance.

In addition to language, the divide also influences diplomatic culture and governance approaches. Francophone nations have inherited centralized administrative frameworks shaped by French political customs, whereas Anglophone nations have embraced more decentralized systems rooted in British colonial governance. These distinctions affect the formulation and implementation of policies, as well as the manner in which leaders engage in negotiations and regional collaboration. Kohnert (2022) asserts that these differing administrative legacies can complicate consensus-building among West African states on regional matters, especially concerning governance reforms and institutional coordination.

The divide between Francophone and Anglophone nations presents significant challenges for policy coordination within ECOWAS. Although the organization was founded to foster economic integration and regional unity, disparities in legal frameworks, economic strategies, and administrative systems frequently hinder the execution of agreements. A notable instance is the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, which, while broadly endorsed, is applied inconsistently among member states due to varying national practices and security apprehensions.

Likewise, initiatives aimed at monetary integration encounter obstacles, as Francophone nations utilize the CFA franc under WAEMU, whereas Anglophone nations retain their own currencies. These structural disparities persist in obstructing comprehensive economic integration within the region (Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2023).

The influence of external powers such as France and Britain further exacerbates this divide. France sustains robust political, economic, and military connections with its former colonies through development assistance, defense collaboration, and the Francophonie network. Nations like Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire continue to reap the benefits of these enduring relationships. In contrast, Britain's influence is less overt but still apparent through the Commonwealth, trade partnerships, and educational ties with countries like Nigeria and Ghana. As noted by Aning and Edu-Afful (2023), these varying degrees of post-colonial engagement lead to differences in foreign policy orientation and regional alignment.

Historically, the division has fostered subtle competition and rivalry within the region. Francophone nations were frequently more aligned with France and Western Europe, whereas Anglophone nations occasionally adopted more independent or Pan-African foreign policies. Nigeria, in particular, has often positioned itself as a leader in the region and has sometimes perceived French influence in West Africa as a challenge to its leadership role (Adebajo, 2024). This dynamic has shaped discussions on security cooperation, peacekeeping, and regional integration.

In recent years, however, cooperation has

increasingly supplanted rivalry. Shared challenges such as terrorism, climate change, migration, and economic underdevelopment have prompted closer collaboration between Francophone and Anglophone nations. ECOWAS has been instrumental in fostering unity by offering a platform for dialogue and collective action. Murithi (2023) notes that security threats, particularly in the Sahel and Gulf of Guinea, have compelled member states to prioritize cooperation over linguistic differences.

Despite these advancements, challenges to integration persist. Political instability, military coups, economic disparities, and varying national interests continue to hinder regional unity. Recent crises in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have further strained relations within ECOWAS and highlighted divisions regarding governance and regional intervention (Edodi & Ahimbisibwe, 2024). Additionally, differences in legal systems pose barriers, as Francophone countries adhere to civil law systems while Anglophone countries follow common law systems inherited from Britain. These disparities impact trade regulation, judicial processes, and policy harmonization (Kohnert, 2022).

Nonetheless, advancements are being made towards enhanced regional integration. Initiatives like the ECOWAS programs and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) are contributing to the reduction of colonial-era divisions and fostering economic collaboration. Infrastructure developments, peacekeeping operations, and cross-border trade initiatives have further bolstered cooperation between Francophone and Anglophone

nations. As noted by Chafer and Cumming (2021), while the divide persists, West Africa is progressively shifting towards collaboration founded on mutual interests rather than colonial legacies.

Challenges Confronting Foreign Policy in Nigeria and Senegal

Despite their significant roles in West African diplomacy, Nigeria and Senegal encounter numerous challenges that influence their foreign policy formulation and execution. These challenges stem from economic pressures, security threats, external influences, weak institutional frameworks, regional instability, and global transformations. Although both nations continue to be pivotal diplomatic players in Africa, the effectiveness of their foreign policy is frequently constrained by both internal and external factors that hinder their ability to fully realize national and regional objectives (Nwangwu, 2024; Kohnert, 2022).

A primary challenge is economic dependency. Effective foreign policy necessitates robust financial resources; however, both nations grapple with economic constraints. Nigeria's heavy reliance on crude oil exports means that fluctuations in global oil prices have a direct impact on government revenue and foreign policy expenditures. During global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the decline in oil revenues diminished Nigeria's capacity to finance diplomatic missions and international engagements Commitments (Ade-Ibijola, 2023). Conversely, Senegal depends on foreign aid, remittances, and external investments, while simultaneously striving to diversify its economy through initiatives such as

the Plan Sénégal Émergent. Nevertheless, reliance on external funding can sometimes sway policy decisions and diminish complete economic independence (Faye, 2024).

Security challenges significantly impact the foreign policy of both nations. In Nigeria, terrorism and insurgency, particularly from Boko Haram and ISWAP, have resulted in enduring security issues that necessitate ongoing diplomatic and military efforts. These threats have compelled Nigeria to emphasize regional security collaboration through ECOWAS and various international alliances (Nwangwu, 2024). Although Senegal does not contend with widespread insurgency, it is influenced by instability in the Sahel region, especially in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. This situation has heightened concerns regarding cross-border terrorism and prompted Senegal to enhance security cooperation with neighboring countries and international allies (Murithi, 2023).

External influence represents a significant challenge. In Senegal, enduring connections with France continue to shape economic, political, and security choices. While this relationship offers support, it also raises issues regarding limited policy autonomy (Kohnert, 2022).

Similarly, Nigeria experiences external pressures from major global powers, including the United States and China, particularly in the realms of trade, investment, and infrastructure development. Although Chinese initiatives have contributed to infrastructure improvements, there are ongoing concerns about debt sustainability and long-term reliance (Adebajo, 2024).

Weak institutional capacity further hampers the

execution of foreign policy. In Nigeria, challenges such as underfunded embassies, inadequate working conditions, and bureaucratic inefficiencies can undermine diplomatic effectiveness abroad (Ade-Ibijola, 2023). Senegal, while generally possessing more stable institutions, still faces limitations due to scarce resources, which can hinder the growth of its diplomatic presence and global influence. Effective foreign policy necessitates well-trained diplomats, sufficient funding, and efficient coordination, all of which both nations are striving to enhance over time (Ndiaye, 2023).

Regional instability and migration also pose significant challenges. Political turmoil and military coups in nations such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have heightened tensions within ECOWAS and generated security and humanitarian pressures throughout the region (Edodi & Ahimbisibwe, 2024). Concurrently, elevated levels of unemployment, insecurity, and climate change have led to increased irregular migration from both Nigeria and Senegal. Many young individuals undertake perilous journeys in pursuit of better opportunities abroad, rendering migration management a crucial aspect of foreign policy (Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2023).

Climate change exacerbates the situation, as desertification, flooding, and coastal erosion impact agriculture and livelihoods throughout West Africa. These environmental issues lead to displacement and competition for resources, intensifying the strain on governments and regional cooperation frameworks (Murithi, 2023). Furthermore, contemporary foreign policy has grown

increasingly intricate, necessitating focus on matters such as cybersecurity, global health, digital governance, and energy transition, all of which require new competencies and enhanced institutions (Nwangwu, 2024).

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of Nigeria and Senegal reveals that the foreign policies of Anglophone and Francophone nations in West Africa have been profoundly influenced by colonial histories, past experiences, and current political and economic contexts. While Nigeria's foreign policy is marked by Afrocentrism, regional leadership, and a more proactive stance in diplomacy and conflict resolution, Senegal's foreign policy emphasizes multilateral cooperation, diplomatic moderation, and strong connections with Francophone institutions and France. Despite these distinctions, both nations are pivotal in fostering regional stability, economic integration, and collective security in West Africa, particularly through ECOWAS and the African Union. This study underscores that although Francophone and Anglophone countries may pursue different diplomatic approaches, they share overarching objectives of national development, regional collaboration, and international engagement, making their cooperation vital for the promotion of peace, stability, and integration in West Africa.

Recommendations

- i. The ECOWAS Commission ought to enhance linguistic and administrative harmonization by advancing interpretation services, standardizing policy documents, and fostering bilingual capabilities across institutions to mitigate

communication barriers between Francophone and Anglophone member states.

- ii. The governments of Nigeria and Senegal should strengthen their bilateral cooperation in areas such as security, trade, and diplomacy through regular high-level meetings, joint committees, and collaborative development initiatives to promote regional stability and mutual understanding.
- iii. West African nations, both Francophone and Anglophone, should focus on aligning policies in critical sectors such as migration, trade liberalization, and counterterrorism by fully executing ECOWAS protocols to enhance

regional integration and minimize policy discrepancies.

- iv. National foreign ministries and diplomatic entities should allocate more resources towards diplomatic training, language skills (in English and French), and professional development to boost efficiency in negotiations and international representation.

International development partners and regional donors should assist in West African integration by financing infrastructure, institutional development, and regional security projects while promoting reduced dependency and encouraging sustainable economic self-sufficiency among member states.

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